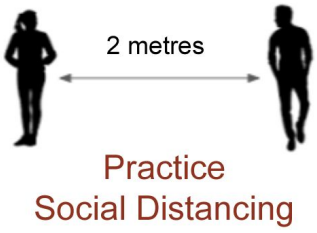

For more information on the Adur and Worthing Councils response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) go to https://www.adur-worthing.gov.uk/coronavirus/

FAQs - Enforcement of standards in rented properties and HMOs

Private rented

Q. I have a complaint about my rented accommodation. Who should I contact?

A. You should contact the Private Sector Housing team for any concerns about your housing conditions as usual using the Council's website or by an email to private.sectorhousing@adur-worthing.gov.uk

Q. Do you need to visit my property to investigate my complaint about my rented accommodation?

A. An officer will contact you and ask for details about your home (e.g. How many people live there, do you have central heating, double glazing, what is the layout of the property, etc.) and they will use this information to triage your complaint.

If, based on the information you provide, they consider that there is a **low** risk of imminent harm, they will suggest deferring any visits until the Covid19 situation has passed and give advice on steps that can be taken to resolve the problems.

If, based on the information you provide, they consider that there is a **medium** risk of imminent harm, they will suggest an inspection, but will ask you to confirm that no-one in the household has the symptoms of Covid19.

If the household is symptom-free and you consent, the inspection will be arranged but face-to-face contact will be minimised by ensuring that rooms

are vacated as and when the officers need to inspect them. If this cannot be achieved the officer will use their judgement, but can terminate the inspection if necessary.

If the household is not symptom free then the inspection must be delayed by 7-14 days dependent upon the level of occupation of the property and current government guidance.

If, based on the information you provide, they consider that there is a **high** risk of imminent harm, then an inspection is essential in order to meet the Council's statutory duties. You will be asked to confirm that no-one in the household has the symptoms of Covid19. If the household is symptom-free, the inspection will be arranged but face-to-face contact will be minimised as above.

If possible, no visits will be made to properties where occupants are either self-isolating or have Covid19 symptoms, but where there is high risk of imminent harm, the officer will inspect but will be wearing suitable PPE.

They will ask the occupant to open the door to the property, but the occupant(s) must then be required to be in a different room to the officers. The officers shall then assess each room and require the occupants to vacate any room prior to entering that room.

If an occupant refuses to leave a room, then that room will not be assessed.

Q. Will you be inspecting my property to check if any Notice has been complied with?

A. If you request an inspection, and the property is vacant and the inspection can be completed within social distancing guidelines, then we can inspect the property.

The team is not, however, arranging routine visits to check on works required by notices at this time.

Q. A notice requiring repairs to my property has been served, but I cannot carry out the works during lockdown. What will the Council do?

A. For existing Notices where the timescale for completing the works has not yet expired, email us on private.sectorhousing@adur-worthing.gov.uk and explain the situation, setting out the works completed so far and your plans for complying with the notice once the current situation has passed.

Officers are also completing notices based upon inspections completed before lockdown. The timescales for completing the necessary repairs is being increased to recognise the difficulties in engaging tradespersons at this time.

For existing Notices where the timescale has expired and the works should have been completed before lockdown was declared, you should email us and explain why you have not complied with the Notice and the likely timescale for completing the works. Failure to comply with the Notice is an offence and any decision on formal legal action following the Covid 19 situation will be on a case-by-case basis.

The main thing is to keep us informed in writing of any reasons why a notice has not been complied with so that we can make any necessary adjustments and considerations about the case.

HMO - House in Multiple Occupation

Q. I have applied for an HMO licence, but you have not completed an inspection. Am I breaking any rules?

A. The team is not arranging programmed inspections for applications for HMO licences unless the property is empty and the inspection can be completed within social distancing guidelines.
If we have accepted a valid application for an HMO licence, then there is no offence of operating an HMO without a licence.
You do still have a duty to make sure that the property is safe and you should have reference to the Sussex standards for HMOs documents that can be found on the website.

Q. Someone in my House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) has the virus, is my landlord obliged to remove them or find me another place to stay?

A. Nobody can be removed from their home because of the virus.

Landlords are not obliged to provide alternative accommodation for tenants if others in the property contract the virus.

If you are living in accommodation which you share with other people, or share facilities with other people, you should follow current Public Health England guidance.

You can also find guidance here on what to do if you are in a shared home with someone who you suspect may have the virus here: What to do if you or someone you share your home with has signs of coronavirus

Adaptation

Q. I am disabled and require an adaptation in my home. How is Covid 19 affecting this?

A. There have been some changes to the process, especially since a lot of people requiring such adaptations are vulnerable in some way.

You still need an assessment of your needs to be carried out by an occupational therapist. They can be contacted at West Sussex County Council on 01243 642121.

If you have been assessed and then referred to Adur & Worthing Councils, your application will be progressed as far as possible. You will be helped with forms and questionnaires over the phone by our Home Improvement Assistance team and any plans and tenders for work will be completed on a sight-unseen basis to take the application as far as being approved.

No actual works can be started in order to protect the health and safety of the contractors and the customer, but we hope that by completing a lot of the paperwork beforehand, we can arrange the adaptation with as little delay as possible.